Teaching NeuroImages: Concurrent hemifacial spasm and trigeminal neuralgia due to vertebrobasilar dolichoectasia

A 64-year-old man reported a 2-week worsening of a 2-year history of paroxysmal, lancinating right facial pain and spasms. Head CT demonstrated a tortuous and ectatic vertebral-basilar system. MRI confirmed a dolichoectatic basilar artery that distorted the right trigeminal (figure 1) and facial nerve roots (figure 2). He failed conservative medical management including carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, and levetiracetam. He underwent Gamma Knife radiosurgery with a few months of pain relief and was offered botulinum neurotoxin injection for spasms.

This case represents a rare presentation of concurrent hemifacial spasm and trigeminal neuralgia linked to an ectatic basilar artery.¹

STUDY FUNDING
No targeted funding reported.

DISCLOSURE
Dr. Lakhan serves on the American Academy of Neurology’s Distance Learning Subcommittee and is an editorial team member of the Resident & Fellow Section of Neurology®. Go to Neurology.org for full disclosures.

REFERENCE
Teaching NeuroImages: Concurrent hemifacial spasm and trigeminal neuralgia due to vertebrobasilar dolichoectasia
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Neurology 2013;81:e52
DOI 10.1212/WNL.0b013e3182a1aaeb

This information is current as of August 19, 2013

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